



PRESS RELEASE

# Governor Baker Visits Lawrence High School To Kick Off Early College Program

Governor and Lt. Governor visiting programs to highlight efforts to expand early college

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Governor Charlie Baker | Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Executive Office of Education

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**LAWRENCE** — Governor Charlie Baker visited Lawrence High School today to help kickoff the school’s new Early College program, where more than 200 students will take college courses at Merrimack College or Northern Essex Community College as a way to prepare them for college and help reduce their overall college costs later.

Early college programs combine traditional high school classes with an opportunity to take college-level courses at a local college, typically in a particular career pathway such as STEM. Successful early college programs make college more accessible to low-income students and give them an opportunity to earn college credits, at no cost to them, while still in high school. Early College programs have also been found to boost college completion rates for low-income students, minorities, and first-generation college-goers. Currently, there are 2,400 Massachusetts students in an early college program, 55 percent of whom are low-income, at 27 programs throughout the Commonwealth.

“Early college programs are an important tool for introducing students to various career paths and making college more affordable,” **said Governor Charlie Baker.** “We commend Lawrence and Receiver Jeff Riley for beginning their own Early College Program and look forward to the benefits it will provide the school system and students for years to come.”

Governor Baker and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito this month are visiting a handful of early college programs in different parts of the state to highlight the Baker-Polito Administration’s commitment to expanding early college opportunities, as well as hear from students about the advantages of taking college classes before graduating from high school. Lt. Governor Polito last week visited Mount Wachusett Community College, Gardner campus, to meet with high school students in the early college program.

“Successful early college programs throughout the state show us that a student’s future prospects can be significantly enhanced by participating in a program,” **said Lt. Governor Karyn Polito.** “We look forward to increasing the number of students who are exposed to college level material while still in high school across the Commonwealth.”

Last spring, Governor Baker announced the Baker-Polito Administration will work to significantly increase the number of students enrolled in designated early college programs across the Commonwealth. The Board of Higher Education and the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education are currently reviewing applications from high schools and community colleges to become “designated” early college programs. The boards received 34 applications from high schools and community colleges around the state. In order to be designated, early college programs must meet certain criteria established by the two boards, including free to students.

The boards will announce designations to early college programs early next year, with the goal of enrolling students in designated programs in the 2018-2019 academic year.

“Expanding early college programs requires real partnerships between high schools and colleges, like the one created here between Lawrence High School, Merrimack College and Northern Essex Community College,” **Education Secretary James Peyser said.** “We are looking forward to seeing more of these types of partnerships created that will benefit thousands more students.”

“Lawrence happens to be home to a lot of talented kids and neighbor to some exceptional institutions of higher education, so being a district for the state’s early college initiative is a perfect fit,” **said Lawrence Public Schools Superintendent Jeff Riley.** “Whether it’s providing credits and exposure for students already on the college path, or helping students who never considered it to see the possibilities, this program can have a long-term, post-graduation impact on students’ lives.”

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